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Clarisse Herrenschmidt and Bruce Lincoln

HEALING AND SALT WATERS: THE BIFURCATED COSMOS OF MAZDAEAN RELIGION

I

The account of creation that figures in twenty-two Achaemenian inscriptions from the reign of Darius the Great (522–486 B.C.E.) to that of Artaxerxes III (359–338) has been subjected to exhaustive study concerning the subtle differences from one variant to another.[1] For our purposes, however, we may take a text like DNa §1 as representative.

> A great god is the Wise Lord, who created this earth, who created that sky, who created mankind, who created happiness for mankind, who made Darius king: one king over many, one master over many.[2]

Among the intricacies of this text is a contrast between two kinds of creation. One is marked by the Old Persian verb dā-, "to establish, set in

[1] Clarisse Herrenschmidt, "Les creations d'Ahuramazda," *Studia Iranica* 6 (1977): 17–58.

[2] DNa §1: baga vazṛka Auramazdā, haya imām būmīm adā, haya avam asmānam adā, haya martiyam adā, haya šiyātim adā martiyahyā, haya Dārayavaum x̌āyaθiyam akunauš, aiṃvam parūnām xšāyaθiyam, aiṃvam parūnām framātāram. Citation of the Achaemenian inscriptions follows the convention established in Ronald G. Kent, *Old Persian Grammar, Texts, Lexicon,* 2d ed. (New Haven, Conn.: American Oriental Society, 1953), through which the first letter represents the king responsible for the inscription (D = Darius, X = Xerxes, A = Artaxerxes), the second letter the site of the inscription in question (B = Bisitun, S = Susa, P = Persepolis, N = Naqši Rustam), and the third letter (in lowercase) represents placement within the series of inscriptions at that site.

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place for the first time," which is used for the originary acts through which the Wise Lord founded the cosmos, and this applies to the first four items listed: earth (būmi-), sky, (asmān-), mankind (martiya-), and "happiness for mankind" (šiyāti- . . . martiyahyā). In contrast, a second kind of creative activity is marked by the verb kar-, "to make, to do." In all but two exceptions this is applied only to the fifth act of creation, which took place at a much later moment of cosmic history and enjoyed a decidedly different status than the others. This was the action through which the deity "made king" (xšāyaθiyam kar-) the man responsible for the inscription: Darius, Xerxes, or whomever.[3]

Inclusion of this fifth act of creation played an important role in Achaemenian ideology, legitimating royal power and constituting each king's accession as the result of divine election. The text's skillful use of verbs also helps specify the ways in which king and deity resembled, but also differed from, each other. While the Great God (baga vazṙka) and the Great King (xšāyaθiya vazṙka) both appear as subjects of the verb kar-, which marks productive action of whatever sort, no one save the former is ever the subject of dā-, a verb reserved for foundational action of divine nature.[4]

It is thus the first four acts—those denoted by the verb dā-—that are properly cosmogonic, and their sequence in the text suggests a taxonomic order, in which two of the creations define the physical expanse of the cosmos, while the other two do similar service for the living creatures who inhabit that expanse (fig. 1).[5]

That Achaemenian usage commonly subjected at least one of these creations to further subcategorization is strongly suggested by the Persian kings' custom of demanding "earth and water" (γῆν τε καὶ ὕδωρ, in Herodotus's phrasing) from their adversaries as token of submission. The "earth" here (= earth_2) designates the physical soil, which in combination with the water of lakes, rivers, and seas, constitutes the full surface of earth_1 ("world"),[6] so that taken together, these gifts signified all of a

[3] The exceptions are DSs §1 and XPl §1.

[4] On the semantics of the latter verb, see Jean Kellens, "Ahura Mazda n'est pas un dieu créateur," in C.-H. de Fouchécour and Ph. Gignoux, *Études irano-aryennes offerts à Gilbert Lazard* (Paris: Association pour l'avancement des études iraniennes, 1989), pp. 217–28. On the homology established between God and King through use of the verb kar-, see Bruce Lincoln, "Old Persian fraša and vašna: Two Terms at the Intersection of Religious and Imperial Discourse," *Indogermanische Forschungen* 101 (1996): 147–67.

[5] From an etic perspective, one might infer a distinction between the Animate and Inanimate components of creation, but there is no clear Iranian vocabulary that might express that categoric opposition.

[6] Indo-Iranian languages distinguish these two, earth_1 being denoted by Old Persian būmi-, Sanskrit bhū́umī-, Persian būm, and earth_2 by Avestan zam, Sanskrit kṣám-, Pahlavi zamīg, Persian zamīn.

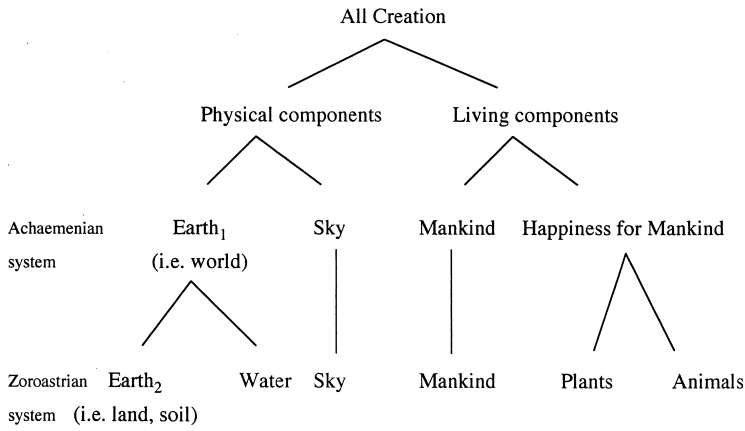

FIG. 1.—Taxonomy expressed through the sequence of creation as narrated in DNa §1 and variants.

given territory, just as a formula such as "day and night" signified all of time.[7] A second subcategorization may also be perceived in the cosmogonic account if it is true, as has recently been argued, that the phrase "happiness for mankind" (šiyāti . . . martiyahyā) refers most concretely to plants and animals, that is, the living beings that constitute the basis of wealth and serve as the foods on which human life, sustenance, and bodily pleasure depend.[8]

Modifying figure 1 to take account of these details permits one to reconcile the Old Persian account of cosmogony with that found in Zoroastrian texts like *Zad Spram* 1.25, which states, "Ohrmazd created creation in bodily and material fashion. First sky, second water, third earth, fourth vegetation, fifth livestock, sixth mankind."[9] Apparently, both the Zoroastrian and the Achaemenian variants participate in a pan-Iranian—one

[7] Amélie Kuhrt, "Earth and Water," *Achaemenid History* 3 (1988): 87–99. The formula "day and night" appears at DB §7: "What was proclaimed to them by me, by day or by night, that was done" [tayašām hacāma aθanhya xšapavā raucapativā, ava akunavayantā]. See further regarding this expression Clarisse Herrenschmidt, "viθā(m) patiy, aggareion," *DATA* (1993): 4.

[8] Thus Bruce Lincoln, *L'empire achéménide comme entreprise sotériologique: La politique du paradis perse* (Paris: Odile Jacob, forthcoming). For earlier treatments of this term, see Clarisse Herrenschmidt, "Vieux-perse šiyāti," in *La religion iranienne à l'époque Achéménide,* Supplément 5, ed. Jean Kellens (Gent: Iranica Antiqua, 1991), pp. 13–21, and J. Kellens, "L'âme entre le cadavre et le paradis," *Journal asiatique* 283 (1995): 19–56, esp. 34–38.

[9] Ohrmazd dām tanōmandīhā bē ō gētīhā dād. fradom asmān dudigar āb sidigar zamīg 4-ōm urwar ud 5-ōm gōspand 6-ōm mardōm. With regard to the fourth and fifth creations ("vegetation," "livestock"), we have translated with terms that finesse the issue of singular

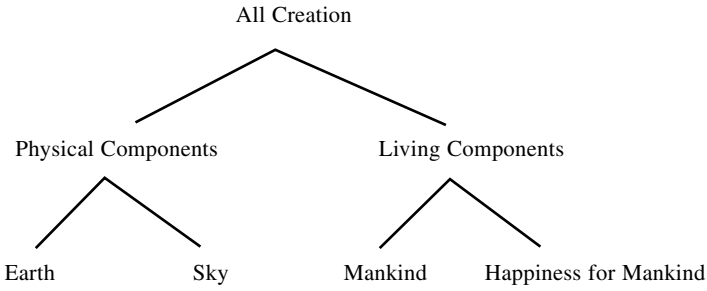

FIG. 2.—Mazdaean cosmogony. The Achaemenian system, attested in DNa §1 et al., renders four entities explicit, treating as implicit subcategories several entities that are spelled out in the Zoroastrian system in Zad Spram 1.23 et al.

might also say "Mazdaean"—tradition that traced the physical cosmos to a discrete set of primordial entities, each created by the Wise Lord, Ahura Mazdā (fig. 2).

II

Since the Mazdaean tradition regarded its deity as entirely good, it also constituted the things he established as good *ab origine,* reflecting the nature of their creator. The imperfections of the world as we know it were thus traced to a second principle, separate from the Wise Lord, lesser than him, and utterly different in nature. Zoroastrian doctrine knows this entity as the "Evil Spirit" (Avestan Aŋra Mainyu, Pahlavi Ahriman), whose primordial "assault" (Avestan aibi.gati-, Pahlavi ēbgat) marked the transition from a perfect to an imperfect creation characterized by mixture and conflict. Within Achaemenian discourse, "the Lie" (Old Persian drauga-) is responsible for a similar rupture in the nature of being, although there this topos is thematized less fully.[10]

Above all, it is the Pahlavi texts that delight in narrating the "Assault" and working out its implications and details. Focusing on each of the original creations in sequence, texts such as Zad Spram and the Bundahišn

and plural. The texts make clear, however, that only one plant and one head of cattle were originally created. The differentiation of species, like death and sexual reproduction, are products of Ahriman's assault. Compare *Greater Bundahisn* 3.7 (TD^2 MS. p. 33, lines 2–5); Škēnd Gumānīg Wizār 1.5; Yašt 13.86; and Yasna 19.8; among Gâthic texts, see Yasna 44.3–6 and 51.7.

[10] The inscriptions tend to historicize this theme, above all in DB §10, where the assault of "the Lie" is made responsible for the intrigue, disorder, crime, and rebellion that commenced when Cambyses left Persia for his Egyptian campaign (525 B.C.E.), thereby ending the golden age of the empire and setting the stage for Darius to represent himself as God's chosen instrument of restoration.

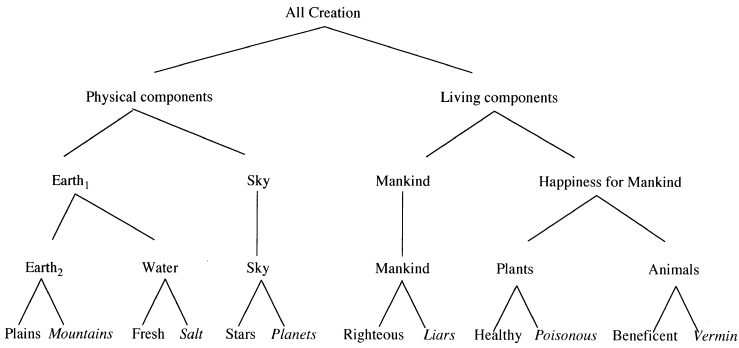

FIG. 3.—Consequences of Ahriman's assault (somewhat simplified, following Zad Spram 3 and Greater Bundahišn 6A-6F, 7, 13, 14, 16, et passim). Zoroastrian texts describe how the Wise Lord's originally good creation was corrupted by evil, such that each entity split into two classes, one still entirely good and the other, debased and destructive.

show how the original pristine nature of the cosmos was affected by the onslaught of the Evil Spirit, whose power was great, but whose intelligence was decidedly lacking. Accordingly, he never succeeded in destroying the Wise Lord's creations. Rather, he fragmented each in turn, producing a bifurcated creation in which one part remained entirely good, while another—its literal counterpart—became corrupt and contaminated.[11]

Thus, to cite one example, Ohrmazd initially made the earth flat and soft, while Ahriman's assault produced mountains that interfere with herding and agriculture and introduce a model of hierarchic stratification.[12] In similar fashion, Ahriman caused the waters to be divided into sweet and salt, plants into beneficent and poisonous, animals into productive and vermin, humans into righteous and liars (fig. 3).[13] It is unclear, however, whether this bifurcated cosmos is part of the general Mazdaean tradition and thus pan-Iranian, or more specifically limited to Zoroastrianism.

[11] We have chosen to employ a discourse of "bifurcation" in place of the more familiar "dualism," since the latter term has assumed so many different connotations and has been so continuously debated as to lose most of its acuity and precision. Briefly, we use "bifurcation" to signal a cosmology in which material existence is theorized as unitary and good in its origin, but marked by division, mixture, and conflict at later stages of history, following the influx of an evil power independent of (and antithetical to) the good creator.

[12] Greater Bundahišn 6C.1 (TD MS. 65.12–14): "When the Evil One rushed in, the earth quaked and the substance of mountains was created in the earth" [ciyōn gannāg andar dwārād zamīg bē andēd. ān gōhr | kōf andar zamīg dād ēstād]. Compare Zad Spram 3.26–36; Dādestān i Dēnīg 70.2; and Bruce Lincoln, "The Earth Becomes Flat: A Study of Apocalyptic Imagery," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 25 (1983): 136–53.

[13] The most concise discussion of these themes is Zad Spram 3. The Greater Bundahišn treats them repeatedly in chapters throughout the body of the text.

III

Although there is no Old Persian text that systematically narrates these later stages in the Zoroastrian cosmogony and the dualistic view of creation they advance, several data are consistent with that system. Three merit our attention and these deal with animals, mountains, and seas.

The first is a well-known description of the Magi, Median priests who later served the Achaemenians and then diffused throughout Asia. According to a much-discussed passage in Herodotus, they maintained a sharp distinction between good and noxious animals.[14] "The Magi differ from many other men and from the priests of Egypt, for the latter sanctify the principle not to kill any animate being, save those they sacrifice. The Magi, in contrast, kill all with their own hands, except dogs and humans. And they wage this great struggle, killing in equal measure ants and serpents and other reptiles and insects."[15]

Although repetition of the verb *kteinô* confuses things somewhat, this passage distinguishes three classes of animate beings, using two variables to do so. Logically, the first category consists of those species that cannot be killed, either in sacrifice or outside it (−/−), except by order of the king, a point this passage ignores, but which has its importance and to which we will return. In any event, this most sacrosanct category includes humans and dogs, the latter of which apparently was considered so close to their masters as to be quasi-human.[16] Second are those that could be killed in sacrifice, but not in other contexts (+/−). Herodotus does not name the species fit to be ritual victims, but presumably these included horses, cattle, sheep, goats, and other domestic species. That these were regarded as pure, moreover, may be inferred from the fact that the Magi—who presided at all sacrifices[17]—killed these animals with their own hands (*auto-*

[14] This text has been discussed, inter alia, by Émile Benveniste, *The Persian Religion according to the Chief Greek Texts* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1929), pp. 33–34; R. C. Zaehner, *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1961), p. 162; Geo Widengren, *Die Religionen Irans* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1965), p. 113; and Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1982) 1:182–83, and *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), p. 76.

[15] Herodotus 1.140: Μάγοι δὲ κεχωρίδαται πολλὸν τῶν τε ἄλλων ἀνθρώπων καὶ τῶν ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ ἱρέων, οἳ μὲν γὰρ ἁγνεύουσι ἔμψυχον μηδὲν κτείνειν, εἰ μὴ ὅσα θύουσι· οἱ δὲ δὴ Μάγοι αὐτοχειρίῃ πάντα πλὴν κυνὸς καὶ ἀνθρώπου κτείνουσι, καὶ ἀγώνισμα μέγα τοῦτο ποιεῦνται, κτείνοντες ὁμοίως μύρμηκάς τε καὶ ὄφις καὶ τἆλλα ἑρπετὰ καὶ πετεινά.

[16] Dogs enjoy high status in Zoroastrianism, but not so high as this. See Boyce, *History of Zoroastrianism* 1:302–3; Herman Lommel, *Die Religion Zarathustras nach dem Awesta dorgestellt* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1930), p. 115.

[17] Herodotus 1.132: "a Magus, standing beside [the sacrificer], sings a theogony of the sort they say is the proper accompaniment, for it is not their custom to perform sacrifices without a Magus" [δὲ αυτοῦ Μάγος ἀνὴρ παρεστεὼς ἐπαείδει θεογονίην, οἵην δὴ ἐκεινοι λέγουσι εἶναι τὴν ἐπαοιδήν· ἄνευ γὰρ δὴ Μάγου οὔ σφι νόμος ἐστὶ θυσίας ποιέεσθαι]. The fact that a hymn of creation was part of the ritual may suggest that principles embedded in the cosmogonic account informed sacrificial practice.

kheiriêi) and feared no pollution from the contact.[18] Third are the beasts who were unfit for sacrifice, but whom one was obliged to destroy in other ways (−/+). These vermin—"ants and serpents and other reptiles and insects"—were despised on several grounds, for these are the creatures who crawl and swarm, sting and bite, and who disrupt cosmologic distinctions of fundamental importance (land/water, heaven/earth, above/below). The Magi waged a "great struggle" (*agônisma mega*) against them, as did Zoroastrian priests, who had special weapons that let them kill without touching the beasts or suffering any pollution.[19]

IV

Just as Herodotus's account of the Magi suggests a binary distinction among animal species corresponding to categories established in Zoroastrian myths of creation, so the role played by mountains in the Achaemenian inscriptions recalls relevant sections of those same myths. Thus, kaufah-, the term for "mountain," appears three times in the Old Persian corpus. One of these (DSf §3g) is unexceptional. The other two occur at crucial points in Darius's account of the rebellions during the first year of his reign (522–521 B.C.E.). In all, he faced nine uprisings, each of which—as he tells it—was inspired by "the Lie" and represented a disorder simultaneously political, moral, and cosmic. Not all of the nine insurrections were equally serious, however, and two stand out as particularly dangerous. These were the two that took place not in the provinces, but in Persia itself, led by rebels who represented themselves as Bardiya, son of Cyrus the Great, and thus rightful heir to the Achaemenian throne.[20] The first of these men was probably Bardiya himself, whom Darius depicted as a devious usurper named "Gaumāta the Magus." Whether as imposter or not, this man seized power from Cambyses (Cyrus's son and successor and Bardiya's elder brother) in March 522 and ruled until September of that same year, when he was murdered by Darius in a palace coup.[21] The sec-

[18] Regarding the question of pollution, see Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices,* p. 44.

[19] Noxious creatures of this sort are called xrafstras in Avestan and the weapon used against them is a xrafstra-gan, literally a "xrafstra-killer." These are discussed at Vīdēvdād 14.8 and 18.2, and injunctions to kill are found at Vīdēvdād 14.5–6, 16.12, 17.3, 18.65, and 18.73. Although these lists vary somewhat, they regularly include reptiles, insects, and dangerous species like serpents and wolves. See further, Lommel, pp. 97–98, 113–16; Widengren, *Religionen Irans,* pp. 113–14; and Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism* 2:90–91, 298–301.

[20] In DB §11, Gaumāta is quoted as saying, "I am Bardiya, the son of Cyrus, brother of Cambyses" [adam Bṛdiya ami, haya Kuraų̆š puça, Kambujiyahyā brātā]. Similar wording occurs at DB §§40, 45 and the minor inscriptions DBb and DBh, although these all omit mention of Cambyses. At best, Darius could trace his descent to a cadet line of the Achaemenian family, which gave him a vastly inferior claim to Bardiya (or anyone who could pass himself off as same).

[21] The events are described in DB §§10–14 and Herodotus 3.30, 61–79. Debate continues, but the majority opinion now favors the view that the first Bardiya was precisely whom he

ond man who called himself "Bardiya" was one Vahyazdāta, who rebelled against Darius late in 522 and succeeded in swaying the Persian army and palace to his cause. His rebellion spread through multiple provinces (Carmania, Drangiana, Gedrosia, Arachosia, also parts of Media and Sattagydia) and lasted until July 521, making it one of the largest, longest, and most serious challenges Darius faced. Indeed, five battles and more than twenty thousand casualties were required for its suppression.[22]

Of particular interest to us, however, is a topographic detail that marks the beginning and end of these two rebellions. Thus, according to Darius's narrative, all insurrectionary activity began at a very precise spot: "[Gaumāta] rose up from Paishiyâuvâda: a mountain named Arakadri, from there."[23] Conversely, the place where the revolt of Vahyazdāta ended is also specified. "A mountain named Parga, there he made battle. . . . [There,] Vahyazdāta was seized and the men who were his foremost followers, they were seized also."[24]

For our purposes, it is less important to discover the geographic location of the mountains in question than to understand their place in the Achaemenian *imaginaire* and the significance of mountains as such. While far from conclusive, the evidence suggests that the inscriptions represent mountains as sites of turbulence, disorder, rebellion, and violence, associated with "the Lie." Further, the vertical code introduced by a discourse of mountains suggests a view of rebels as those who sought to raise themselves higher than others—or higher than a just, that is, level, cosmos would permit—and who were brought low by a king who reestablished such a just order.

V

A similar case might be made concerning Old Persian drayah-, which denotes a large body of salt water that marks borders having ethical and cosmological, as well as political aspects. Thus, drayah is almost always used with reference to one of two peoples—Scythians and Greeks—who were themselves divided into subgroupings. On the near side of the water lay those Greeks and Scythians who had been conquered by the Persians and absorbed within their empire. On the far side, lay those who remained

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claimed to be, "Gaumāta" being a creation of Darius's propaganda. For a summary discussion of the question, see Pierre Briant, *Histoire de l'empire perse de Cyrus à Alexandre* (Paris: Fayard, 1996), pp. 109–18.

[22] Tabulation of the casualties is included in the Babylonian, but not the Old Persian variant, of the Bisitun inscription. See DB §§40–48 and the corresponding DBBab §§33–38. A good historic analysis is found in M. A. Dandamaev, *A Political History of the Achaemenid Empire,* trans. W. J. Vogelsang (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989), pp. 116–19.

[23] DB §11: haų udapatatā hacā Paįšiyāų̯vādā, Arakadriš nāma kaų̯fa, hacā avadaš.

[24] DB §42: Pṛga nāma kaų̯fa, avadā hamaranam akunava . . . utā avam Vahyazdātam agṛbāya utā martiyā, tayaįšaį fratamā āhanta, agṛbāya.

beyond the Persian grasp and who inflicted painful defeats on Persian power.[25]

That the sea provoked considerable anxiety among Persians is clear from Herodotus's account of their navy (whose ships were predominantly Phoenician, Egyptian, and Ionian, but almost never Persian or Mede),[26] the many storms, shipwrecks, and disasters it suffered,[27] and the fear such possibilities occasioned.[28] Further, a recurrent symbolic construct appears throughout the Herodotean text, building on a contrast of land and sea.[29]

Land : Sea ::
Persia : Greece ::
Strength : Weakness ::
Confidence : Fear ::
Good : Evil

The system one finds in Zoroastrianism is quite different, for there the organizing binary contrasts two kinds of water, whose difference is narrated in myths of creation. Thus, the good, fresh water created by the Wise Lord at the dawn of time was later corrupted by poison flowing from the corpses of noxious animals, themselves created by the Evil Spirit. As the Greater Bundahišn puts it: "The poison of the vermin was all within the earth and it mixed into the water and made most of this water salty."[30] Elsewhere, we are told the salt produced a stench that made these waters inhospitable,[31] and that "thirst came to water."[32] This last detail reflects

[25] Scythians are at issue in DB §74; DNa §3; and A$^{?}$P 24; Greeks, at DPe §2; DSe §3; and XPh §3. In two cases, drayah is used in somewhat different fashion, with reference to unspecified peoples who dwell by the sea in DB §6 (tayaḷ drayahyā) and to the Persian Gulf in an inscription celebrating Darius's construction of the Suez canal (DZc §3). That seas constituted the borders and limits of the Persian empire is also made explicit by Herodotus 4.37–40.

[26] On the national composition of the Persian fleet, see H. T. Wallinga, "The Ancient Persian Navy and its Predecessors," *Achaemenid History* 1 (1987): 47–77; and Herodotus 3.19, 4.89, 6.6, 6.14, 6.25, 6.33, 7.89–96, 8.17. Persian strength on land compared to their weakness at sea is thematized by Herodotus 5.108–9, 5.115–16, 6.7, 6.28, 8.68, 8.100–101.

[27] Storms and shipwrecks: Herodotus 3.138, 6.44–45, 7.188–92, 8.12–14, 8.118; defeats, 7.139, 7.194, 8.83–96; other difficulties and hardships, 7.34–35, 7.54, 8.89, 8.109, 8.117.

[28] Expressions of fear, loneliness, anxiety with regard to the sea: Herodotus 4.43, 6.9, 6.95, 7.22, 7.49–50, 8.68, 8.118, 8.130; confusion and disorder, 7.194, 8.86, 8.88.

[29] Pascal Payen, *Les îles nomades: conquérir et résister dans l'Enquête d'Hérodote* (Paris: Editions de l'Ecole des hautes études en sciences, 1997), pp. 204–11 has shown how important this construct is in Greek, and especially in Herodotean, thought. We do not have direct testimony as to whether Persians theorized in precisely the same fashion, but a strong argument that this was the case has been made by Steven Hirsch, "Cyrus' Parable of the Fish: Sea Power in the Early Relations of Greece and Persia," *Classical Journal* 81 (1986): 222–29.

[30] Greater Bundahišn 6B.15 (TD MS. 63.8–10): ān wiš [ī] xrafstarān ī andar zamīg bawēd. hamāg andar ān ⟨bē⟩ āb be gumēxt. An āb mahistar sōr bē kard. Compare Zad Spram 3.17–25.

[31] Greater Bundahišn 10.18 (TD MS. 84.6–8): "One is not able to go as near as a league to the salt seas because of the stench nearby" [an-iz zrēhīhā sōr pad nazdīk gandagīh rāy tā hāsar ō nazd nē šāyēd šudan].

[32] Ibid. 5.3 (TD MS. 49.2): tišn ō ī āb.

the knowledge that salt makes seawater undrinkable, inducing a thirst the water cannot quench. Myth treats this as the result of Ahriman's assault, such that the addition of salt to Ohrmazdian water turns it into a demonic, contradictory substance where moisture and its antithesis commingle. The Zoroastrian construct follows accordingly.

Fresh Water	:	Salt Water ::
Drink	:	Thirst ::
Moist	:	Dry ::
Wise Lord	:	Evil Spirit ::
Original Creation	:	Mingled Reality subsequent to Demonic Assault ::
Good	:	Evil

VI

Something approximating the Zoroastrian construct may be perceived in Herodotus's report of two inscriptions Darius erected early in his Scythian expedition.[33] The first of these listed the nations and peoples he led over the Bosporus, the channel that connects the Pontus (i.e., the Black Sea) and Propontis that divides Europe from Asia.[34] Although Herodotus does not preserve the wording of this bilingual (Greek and cuneiform) text, one senses a certain anxiety and *hybris* in Darius's attitude that foreshadows not only his own difficulties in Europe, but also those Xerxes experienced as a consequence of his similarly hybristic traversal of the Hellespont.[35]

Passage further south facilitated Xerxes' march on Greece; crossing at the Bosporus, in contrast, let Darius pursue the Scythians west of the Black Sea, which constituted the border between Persians and Scyths.[36] Persians called this sea a drayah, as we have seen, while Greeks used a

[33] According to Herodotus 4.87, the stelae bearing the first of these inscriptions were carried off by the Byzantines, who used the stone to build certain temples. The second, however, seems to have been still extant when Herodotus wrote, and a nineteenth century traveler—whose testimony was accepted by W. W. How and J. Wells, *A Commentary on Herodotus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928) 1:334; and others—claimed that reliable witnesses knew of its survival as late as 1830. Lieutenant-General A. Jochmu, "Notes on a Journey into the Balkan, or Mount Hæmus, in 1847," *Journal of the Royal Geographic Society* 24 (1854): 43–44.

[34] Herodotus 4.87. A detailed description of these waters is given at 4.85.

[35] On the difficult passage at the Hellespont and Xerxes' consequent impious conduct, see Herodotus 7.34–35 and 7.54–56. These events provoke divine nemesis and are cited as a cause of the Persian defeat at 8.109. Aeschylus, however, sets Xerxes' hybristic crossing at the Bosporus, *Persians* 723–28 and 745–51. See also Maria Rocchi, "Serse e l'«Acqua Amara» dell'Ellesponto," in *Perennitas: Studi in Onore di Angelo Brelich* (Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1980), pp. 417–29.

[36] Ibid. 4.38 and 4.99.

variety of terms: *thalassa, pelagos, pontos,* all of which mark it as big and salty.[37] Strabo and Polybius both discuss the salinity of its waters and those of the Borporus, while also treating the dangerous winds and currents of the latter.[38] For his part, Herodotus notes that the water of the Black Sea produced the world's stupidest peoples.[39]

Several days after making this passage, Darius reached the river Tearus in Thrace and raised a second inscription, regarding which Herodotus provides this account.

> The Tearus is said to be the best among neighboring rivers for cures of other kinds, but especially for healing *psôrê* in men and in horses. It has thirty-eight springs, all flowing from the same rock. Some of them are cold and some hot. . . . Arriving at this river, Darius camped there and, being delighted with the river, he erected a stêle, on which he engraved these letters: "The headwaters of the river Tearus produce the best and the fairest water of all rivers. Leading his army against the Scythians, to these there arrived the best and the fairest man of all men: Darius, son of Hystaspes, king of the Persians and all the mainland."[40]

Why did Darius judge the water of this rather obscure river the "best and fairest" (*ariston te kai kalliston*) of all?[41] Apparently due to its healing

[37] The Greeks regularly called the Black Sea simply *Pontos* ("The Sea"), although they sometimes extended (and euphemized) its name: *Pontos Euxeinos* ("The Sea Auspicious to Strangers"). Herodotus refers to it as *thalassa* ("sea, ocean") at 4.38, 4.89, and 4.99; as *pelagos* ("high sea, open sea"), at 4.85.

[38] Strabo 1.3.4–6; Polybius 4.39–44.

[39] Ibid. 4.46: "The Black Sea, to which Darius led his army, of all places produces the nations most lacking in knowledge, with the exception of the Scythians" [Ὁ δὲ Πόντος ὁ Εὔξεινος, ἐπ' ὃν ἐστρατεύετο ὁ Δαρεῖος, χωρέων πασέων παρέχεται ἔξω τοῦ Σκυθικοῦ ἔθνεα ἀμαθέστατα].

[40] Herodotus 4.90–91: Ὁ δὲ Τέαρος λέγεται ὑπὸ τῶν περιοίκων εἶναι ποταμῶν ἄριστος τά τε ἄλλα τὰ ἐς ἄκεσιν φέροντα καὶ δὴ καὶ ἀνδράσι καὶ ἵπποισι ψώρην ἀκέσασθαι. εἰσὶ δὲ αὐτοῦ αἱ πηγὴ δυῶν δέουσαι τεσσεράκοντα, ἐκ πέρτης τῆς αὐτῆς ῥέουσαι, καὶ αἱμὲν αὐτέων εἰσι ψυχραὶ αἱ δὲ θερμαί. . . . Ἐπὶ τοῦτον ὦν τὸν ποταμὸν ἀπικόμενος ὁ Δαρεῖος ὡς ἐστρατοπεδεύσατο, ἡσθεὶς τῷ ποταμῷ στήλην ἔστησε καὶ ἐνθαῦτα, γράμματα ἐγγράψας λέγοντα τάδε. Τεάρου ποταμοῦ κεφαλαὶ ὕδωρ ἄριστόν τε καὶ κάλλιστον παρέχονται πάντων ποταμῶν· καὶ ἐπ' αὐτὰς ἀπίκετο ἐλαύνων ἐπὶ Σκύθας στρατὸν ἀνὴρ ἄριστός τε καὶ κάλλιστος πάντων ἀνθρώπων, Δαρεῖος ὁ Υστάσπεος, Περσέων τε καὶ πάσης τῆς ἠπείρου Βασιλεύς.

[41] Ancient sources make very little mention of the Tearus. It appears only in the present passage, an epigram attributed to Simonides (*Anthologia Palatina* 7.514), and Pliny's *Natural History* 4.45. Older, more positivistic scholarship was eager to identify this river and its multiple sources with an extensive series of springs around Pinarhisar in European Turkey (Kirklareli province, near the Bulgarian border). See Jochmu, pp. 43–44 and Eckhard Unger, "Die Dariusstele am Tearos," *Archäologische Anzeiger* (1915): 3–16 (with a Nachschrift by F. H. Weissbach, pp. 16–17). Later scholarship has focused more on discourse than on realia, observing that the Herodotean text differs from standard Old Persian formulae, particularly as regards the royal title employed ("King of the Persians and all the mainland," Περσέων τε καὶ πάσης τῆς ἠπείρου βασιλεύς). Thus, Walther Hinz, *Darius und die Perser: Eine Kulturgeschichte der Achämeniden* (Baden-Baden: Holle Verlag, 1976), pp. 201 and 205; Rüdiger Schmitt, "Achaimenideninschriften in griechischer literarischer Überlieferung," *Acta Iranica* 28 (1998): 34–36.

properties and above all, its ability to cure *psôrê*.[42] Understanding the nature of this ailment, which took a variety of forms, is thus of considerable interest. In the vegetal kingdom, it manifested itself as Cladosporium herbarum, a scab appearing on fig trees overgrown with moss.[43] Among animals, it showed up as scabby hooves or a mangy pelt and was treated with old wine or cucumber root.[44] Among humans, its most common symptoms were scabs and a fierce itch,[45] but these reflect and derive from an underlying state of profound dryness, as is seen from the fact that *psôrê* was usually connected to organs whose normal, healthy state of pronounced moisture was disrupted by the illness: the eyes, the womb, and the bladder.[46]

Regrettably, no medical text describes the treatment recommended for *psôrê* in its common form. The closest we have is what Galen said regarding "*psôrê* of the eyes" (*psôrophthalmia*). This, however, is highly instructive.

> For those whose eyes, irritated by sun and dust have developed *psôra* of the eye and dryness of the eye, they should be washed with much water, cold in summer and warm in winter. A vapor bath from a sponge with hot water or lentil decoction is applied. One also places at the corners of their eyes the juice of bramble, squill, myrtle, and roses, together with water. And above all, they often sleep with (a dressing of) dry roses crushed into wine, or their blossom, or wine uncontaminated by sea water and old olive oil.[47]

Three details in this passage are extremely significant and lead to the same conclusion. First, *psôrophthalmia* is grouped with *xêrophthalmia,* "dryness of the eyes." Second, both disorders have the same cause: over-

[42] *psôrê* (*psôra* in Attic) is derived from the verb **psêô,* "to scratch, rub oneself"; the term denotes a terrible itch, also the scabs and dry skin that produce it (cf. English "psoriasis"). As a gloss, the *Suda* provides κνεσμονή, from the verb κνάω, "to scratch." For a fuller etymological discussion, see Pierre Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque* (Paris: Éditions Klincksieck, 1968–80) 4:1290; or Hjalmar Frisk, *Griechisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1973) 2:1134–36.

[43] Theophrastus, *Peri Phytôn Historias* 4.14.3.

[44] Discussions of *psôrê* in the context of veterinary medicine include Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 1.4.11; Herodas 7.117; and Plutarch, *Moralia* 671a. Treatment with old wine is attested by Polybius 3.88.1 and with wild cucumber root by Theophrastus *Peri Phytôn Historias* 9.9.4.

[45] Thus Plato, *Gorgias* 494c, *Philebus* 46a; Septuagint Leviticus 21:20 and 22:22.

[46] Thus Hippocrates De Natura Mulierum 79 (womb), *Aphorism* 4.77 and *Peri Physios Anthrôpou* 14 (bladder). Galen 12.717, 12.798–99, 14.766 (eyes).

[47] Galen, *Peri Syntheseos Pharmakôn,* ed. Kühn 12:798: Πρὸς δὲ τὰς περὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς διὰ τὸν ἥλιον καὶ κονιορτὸν, ὡς ἐπίπαν ψωροφθαλμίας καὶ ξηροφθαλμιάς, ὕδωρ πλεῖον προσκλυζόμενον, θέρους μὲν ψυχρὸν, χειμῶνος δὲ θερμὸν, ἁρμόζει καὶ πυρία σπόγγου ἐκ θερμοῦ ὕδατος ἢ φακοῦ ἀφεψήματος, αὐτοῖς δέ πρόσαγε τοῖς κανθοῖς, βάτου, σχίνου, μυρσίνης, ῥόδων χυλὸν κατ' ιδίαν ἕκαστον σὺν ὕδατι. ἢ ῥόδα ξηρὰ τριβόμενα σὺν οἴνῳ ἢ τὸ ἄνθος αὐτῶν, ἢ οἶνον ἀθάλασσον καὶ παλαιὸν ἔλαιον, καὶ μάλιστα ὅταν κοιμᾶσθαι θέλωσι.

exposure to sun and dust or, to put it in terms of the elementary qualities theorized by Hippocratic medicine, an excess of the hot and the dry. Third, therapy aims to supply necessary moisture through eyewash, vapor baths, botanical fluids and decoctions, old olive oil, or wine uncontaminated by seawater (*oinon athalasson*). The reason for this last specification is most revealing of all and is reminiscent of the analysis of salt, the sea, moisture, and thirst we found in Zoroastrian myth. In Galen's treatment of *psôrophthalmia* and Darius's inscriptions at the Bosporus and Tearus, we can thus identify the following symbolic construct.[48]

Health	:	*Psôrê* ::
Moisture	:	Dryness ::
Fresh water	:	Salt water ::
Rivers	:	Seas (and channels with salt water) ::
Tearus	:	Bosporus ::
Good	:	Evil

VII

As we said earlier, these data are not conclusive. They are, however, suggestive. Anyone who carefully considers the primary data of Achaemenian religion and Zoroastrianism will observe both similarities and differences, but the materials we have just discussed show the two were even more similar than many scholars have recognized. We offer two possible explanations for this state of affairs, as we differ somewhat in our views on this. One of us takes the Achaemenians to have been Zoroastrians, but after their own particular fashion and according to their own method (Herrenschmidt). The other does not rule out this possibility, but regards Achaemenian religion and Zoroastrianism as two variant forms of a broader tradition, which may be named Mazdaean, or simply Iranian (Lincoln). Whatever the historic relation between the two systems may have been, we hope to have established that according to both, Ahura Mazdā, the "Wise Lord," originally created a finite, but eminently coherent set of entities, each of which reflected its creator's absolute goodness. Heaven, earth, and mankind were explicitly named in both variants, while three other creations—plants, animals, and water—were specified in the Zoroastrian version and implied in the Achaemenian. Second, we have noted

[48] That the Tearus actually was fed by thirty-eight springs, hot and cold in equal measure, seems extremely unlikely. Rather, this piece of Herodotus's description is governed by the same theoretical orientation that led Galen to prescribe cold water for *psôrophthalmia* in summer and hot water in winter. Moisture corrects dryness as its opposite, and the elementary opposition hot/cold is irrelevant, unless other variables—the time of year, for instance—make this a contributing factor.

that the Zoroastrian cosmogony describes how the Evil Spirit attacked the Wise Lord's good creation, producing a bifurcation within each of its constituent parts. Several pieces of evidence have led us to think that the Achaemenians also regarded animals, earth, and waters as bifurcated, such that two forms of each were recognized, differing in their physical properties, originary agents, and ethical status.

A similar view of humanity was part of Achaemenian religion, as a close reading of Darius's funerary inscription (DNb) has recently revealed. There, one finds a theory of the person in which certain qualities such as anger and panic are regarded as demonic forces that can—and must—be brought under control by other qualities of divine origin (wisdom, understanding, self-control, e.g.) and by those persons who have such qualities in abundance, the king, above all.[49] Also relevant is the sharp distinction the Old Persian inscriptions draw between rebels and loyal subjects. Although all people were initially part of the same good "mankind" (martiya), the activity of the Lie (drauga) changed this primordial unity, as some became "evil" (or, more precisely, "vulnerable to the Lie," arika-),[50] after which they turned disorderly and rebellious.[51] Like monarchs everywhere, Achaemenian kings made it their business to execute rebel leaders, and this seems to have been constituted as a legal, rather than a sacrificial action since, as we have seen, humans could not serve as sacrificial victims.[52] Even so, these executions served a religious purpose much like that which the Magi advanced by "killing . . . ants and serpents and other reptiles and insects."[53] In both instances, the respective actors cleared away the corrupt part of the human and animal creation, thereby reversing the evil introduced by the Lie and restoring perfection, as per the Wise Lord's original intentions.[54] Reading against the grain, as always, yields another

[49] Clarisse Herrenschmidt, "Le moi mazdéen et les âmes," *Iranian Journal of Anthropology* 1 (2002): 19–31.

[50] Regarding the translation of arika-, see Lincoln, *L'empire achéménide comme entreprise sotériologique* (n. 8 above).

[51] Rebels and their activity are marked by a number of lexemes, most notably the adjective hamiçiya (rebellious, conspiratorial) and the verbs ud-pat- (to rise up) and yaud- (to be stirred up, become disorderly). Typically, insurrections are described as having been provoked by an act of false speech (duruj-), in which the rebel misrepresented himself as holding a legitimate claim to the throne. This prompted other actions, as the people/army defected to him (abi avam ašiyava) and he seized the kingship/kingdom (xšaçam haų agṙbāyata). The formulaic descriptions of rebellion deserve fuller study than is possible in the present context.

[52] Herodotus 1.140. If this is so, the bodily mutilation of Fravarti and Tritantaxma (described at DB §§32 and 33) should be understood as torture, humiliation, and a theater of cruelty, rather than as a form of quasi-sacrificial dismemberment.

[53] Herodotus 1.140.

[54] Darius reports his execution of rebels at DB §§13, 17, 20, 32, 33, 43, 47, and 50. Note the complementarity of priests and kings, whose defining activities and spheres of competence

story, whereby kings who defined their enemies as instruments of "the Lie" thus empowered themselves to treat the latter like vermin and call it a sacred business.

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were kept strictly separate. Where priests were responsible for maintenance of the cosmic order through performance of sacrifices in which animals, plants, and waters might be offered, kings preserved the legal, social, and political order, executing human malefactors—those subject to the Lie—toward this end.